

Policy Brief: Time Use and Its Relationship with Political Participation from an Intersectional Approach

To the Attention of the Barcelona City Council

Introduction

Time management is a crucial factor in fostering political participation, particularly in a diverse and dynamic city such as Barcelona. Time use directly influences the degree of citizen engagement in political, social, and cultural processes. An intersectional approach to the study of time makes it possible to recognize how different factors—such as gender, social class, ethnicity, age, and working conditions—affect individuals' ability to actively participate in politics. This gap in access to political participation may deepen existing inequalities, thereby limiting inclusive democracy.

Problem

Political participation is not equitably distributed within society, and one of the determining factors is access to and management of time. Individuals who face multiple forms of oppression or disadvantage—such as women, people with family responsibilities, precarious workers, and members of ethnic minorities—have fewer resources and less time to engage in political activities. This undermines both representativeness and fairness in public policymaking.

Objective

The purpose of this policy brief is to identify and recommend measures to optimize time use in political participation, applying an intersectional approach to ensure a more inclusive democracy in Barcelona.

Recommendations

1. Promote Flexibility in Political Participation Spaces

Participatory processes must adapt to the realities of different social groups. This entails providing both in-person and virtual participation opportunities, with varied and flexible schedules that respond to the needs of individuals with part-time jobs, long working hours, or caregiving responsibilities.

Proposal: Establish an accessible and user-friendly digital platform that allows participation in debates, voting, and consultations at any time of day, overcoming barriers such as work or family schedules.

2. Encourage the Participation of Women and Caregivers

Those with family responsibilities, predominantly women, face significant obstacles to political participation due to the burden of unpaid domestic and caregiving work. Measures such as childcare at public events or compensation for unpaid work hours would enable greater inclusion.

Proposal: Implement family support programs, such as free childcare during participatory meetings, and ensure equitable representation of women in participatory bodies.

3. Promote Training in Time Management

Many individuals, particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, lack tools to organize their time effectively. Workshops on time management could serve as a valuable resource to empower these individuals and grant them greater autonomy to engage in political life.

Proposal: Develop educational programs tailored to different groups, focusing on organizational and time optimization skills, with particular attention to gender equity and cultural diversity.

4. Ensure the Representation of Minority Groups

Individuals belonging to diverse ethnic and cultural groups often face additional barriers limiting political participation. Policies must account for these differences in time use, recognizing the ways in which different cultures and languages structure daily activities.

Proposal: Provide interpretation and translation services in public meetings and political consultations. Additionally, cultural festivities and rituals of minority groups should be considered so as not to coincide with key dates that hold significance for their communities.

5. Foster Participation Among Young People and Older Adults

Young people, especially those in precarious situations, and older adults often find their time consumed by activities that hinder political involvement. Policies should be inclusive and facilitate the active participation of these groups.

Proposal: Create participation spaces specifically designed for young people and older adults, accounting for their schedules and their preferred ways of engaging with technology. These spaces may be more informal and adapted to their specific needs.

6. Design Public Policies with an Intersectional Perspective

To ensure that political participation mechanisms reach all citizens equitably, it is essential to design policies that consider the intersection of multiple forms of oppression. The City Council should conduct an intersectional analysis of existing policies and adjust them where necessary.

Proposal: Implement intersectional impact assessments in all political and social participation policies to identify potential gaps and foster the genuine inclusion of all sectors of the population.

Conclusion

Time is a crucial resource in political participation. For all Barcelona residents to actively engage in political life, public policies must be designed with full consideration of the multiple realities and circumstances that affect individuals, using an intersectional approach. This ensures equitable, inclusive, and representative participation, thereby strengthening democracy and social cohesion.

Call to Action

The Barcelona City Council has a unique opportunity to lead in promoting inclusive political participation. By adopting the recommendations set out in this policy brief, the City Council

will contribute to building a more just, democratic, and representative city that truly reflects all the voices of its community.

Key References

- Bittman, M., & Wajcman, J. (2000). *The Rush Hour: The Character of Leisure Time and Gendered Time*
Examines how time use is shaped by gender, arguing that women, due to domestic responsibilities, have less time for social and political activities. Discusses how these differences impact political participation.
- Hochschild, A. R., & Machung, A. (2012). *The Second Shift: Working Families and the Revolution at Home*
Analyzes how women employed outside the home continue to bear the majority of domestic work. The concept of the "second shift" illustrates how this time burden affects women's political participation.
- Lister, R. (2003). *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives*
Provides a feminist perspective on citizenship and political participation, highlighting how women's structured time limits their active engagement in politics.
- Fraser, N. (2016). *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition*
Explores how social justice and gender equality are linked to the reorganization of time, and how different temporal experiences influence individuals' ability to participate in public life.
- Kerrissey, J., & Atkinson, K. B. (2020). *Time, Gender, and Politics: The Impact of Temporal Inequalities on Political Participation*
Addresses how temporal inequalities between men and women affect political participation, considering paid work, unpaid care work, and leisure time.
- Schneider, E., & Lee, H. A. (2017). *Time, Technology, and Political Engagement*
Examines how technology reshapes expectations of time use, influencing political engagement, and how these expectations vary by social and class contexts.
- Tarrow, S. (1994). *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*
Discusses the role of time in social and political movements, including how individuals organize their schedules around political events and how socioeconomic conditions affect these decisions.
- Arnstein, S. R. (1969). *A Ladder of Citizen Participation*
Although not focused exclusively on time use, this framework helps understand how citizen participation may be limited by barriers such as lack of time, especially across different social classes.

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